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ABSTRACT

A variety of ecological, economic, and social changes are now reshaping rural America. The deterioration of the economic structures and perceived quality of social life in large metropolitan centers of the United States has stimulated the dispersal of population and economic resources throughout rural America. During the last decade almost three million more people moved out of metropolitan areas than moved in and three-fourths of all nonmetropolitan U.S. counties gained population. This growth in rural population and the accompanying technological and economic growth of rural America have led to severe difficulties for rural areas as they attempt to maintain the relative lack of pollution and the land availability of the rural environment. Rural America is characterized by an increasing racial and ethnic variability. In addition, recent evidence indicates that the aspirations and values of rural people are, in general, as pluralistic as those of metropolitan people of the same region, ethnicity, and social class. Contemporary changes in the population and nature of rural America must be considered by social scientists and government policymakers and operatives. (Related reports on rural development in America are available through ERIC--see note.) (MN)

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"RURAL AMERICA: THE PRESENT REALITIES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS."

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The Fact and Fantasy of Rural America

Although "rural" has become increasingly difficult to define in the 1980's, it is no less real. There is a part of our society that doesn't fit the big city model. It is a world of small towns and open country. It is a world of low population density, small places, and much space. It is a world where it takes a long time to get anywhere, and when you get there, you may not see it; but there isn't rush hour traffic. It's where the costs of going shopping mean that you don't go very often, and where (in the United States) there is very little public transportation.

It is a world where you personally know most of the people you see and where you are known by the people you see. It is a world on a smaller scale that is still largely comprehensible and visible to its dwellers. It is a world of informality and custom, where the rules bend to fit the situation. It is a world where one's reputation and the expec ations of friends are more powerful force than the police-man and the court.

It's the world of the farmer, but with less than one in every ten people out there farming, it's really the world of the commuter. It's the world of the retired, the vacationer, and those who are trying to get away from it all. It's the world of natural resources — coal, oil, gas, minerals — and of food, fiber, lumber, and fish.

It's the world of national fantasy and the Founding Fathers' dreams of the yeoman farmer — the Minuteman at Lexington and Concord, the home-steader, the cowboy, Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn, Will Rogers, Norman Rock-

well, and Andrew Wyeth. It's the city man's sandbox and the place from where the music comes. It's where we are when we are on the road. It's where they style the early American furniture and where the family farmer dwells. The air smells so clean and on a clear day you can see forever. It's the bedrock of an American heritage to which we periodically look for redemption.

As a repository of national fantasy it casts a curious spell on our attempts to comprehend it. What it ought to be makes it difficult to see it for what it is. What it has been blinds us to what it may be.

The foregoing should more than amply suggest that rural America is very difficult to grasp factually. "Rural" has eluded definition by the United States Bureau of the Census, which has traditionally defined it as all places of less than 2500 people. Unfortunately, many such places have been overrun by great cities. Many small towns do not take on a genuine urban character until they are much larger, perhaps as much as 50,000.

In recent years the Census has taken another tack by categorizing places of 50,000 or more population and their surrounding counties as "metropolitan". This categorization errs in the other direction. Many metropolitan counties have very rural portions. For instance, at least a fifth of the nation's farm production occurs in metropolitan counties.

As a result, we have very inexact statistical information on rural America. The rural-urban distinction tends to be ficticious and the metropolitan-nonmetropolitan differentiation tends to be much too coarse. Our inferences about the number of people involved, and who they may be, are therefore rough, but it's safe to say that rural America includes over one fourth of the population of the country who are living on ninety-eight percent of the land.

We operational define "rural America" as constituted of the society's nonmetropolitan areas considered collectively While this is a pragmatic decision based on facilitation of issue development and impacting on political processes, it is probably not too far from the generally shared social meaning of the term. This definition or an approximate to it is receiving increasing support by scholars and others hoping to influence public policy (Sher, 1977:375; Kuvlesky, 1977:2; Hassinger, 1978:51-54; Bealer, 1981:19-25; Fratoe, 1981).

A New Rural America In The Making

Rural America, the vast array of diverse nonmetropolitan areas which cement the large metroplexes of our society together geographically and socially, is being reshaped rapidly. This complex transformation of truely great historical significance is taking place with little public notice and unbelievable lack of concern. Yet, the results and outcomes of the ecological, economic, and broad social changes that are now reshaping rural sectors of our country may well define the character of the United States for several generations to come.

A new rural America is evolving: an expanding, revitalized and increasingly diverse mixture of growing communities, industries, new institutions, and varied people. Several decades ago it was popular to speak of people living in the hinterland of America as "The People Left Behind" (Advisory Com. on Rural Poverty, 1967). Rural Americans and their communities were thought of, if they were thought of at all, as an archaic social residual of an earlier society which had already vanished. But times do change and sometimes they change dramatically. The deterioration of the economic structures and perceived quality of

social life in large metropolitan centers of the United States in the past decade has stimulated a dispersal of population and economic resources throughout rural America. A new, very different rural America is being shaped and it will become increasingly important to the future of American society at large. The new trends will spawn new, complex interrelationships between the metropolitan and nonmetropolitan sectors of our society. It will be the consequences of this new configuration of relationships that will create the framework for a renewed American society during the first half of the twenty-first century. We must try to work with these changes constructively to provide a society that can offer the "good life" to all. Clearly, vast numbers of diverse Americans are seeking their dreams in new place of residence settings that represent some synthesis of our earlier notions of rural living and metropolitan existence (Kasarda, 1980:381-383). It is time we took a new, fresh look at rural America and what it is becoming.[1]

There can be little question that future population growth, economic development, and the dominant value patterns and styles of life within our nation will be forged to some considerable extent in what are now nonmetropolitan areas of the United States. But, what is really happening out there? What are the people like? What kind of communities are evolving, and how are they relating to one another? Are they human social configurations we want and value? What alternative configurations exist or are possible? Which among these should we foster and help develop and which should we try to alter? Or, should we do nothing and wait to see what the new rural America will become without

[1] Several collaborating sets of rural sociologists and others have attempted to do just this in recent years. See among others Copp (1964), Sher (1977), Ford (1978), Hassinger (1978), Swanson, et. al. (1979), SSQ (Dec., 1980), Dillman and Hobbs (1981), Brown and Wardwell (1980).

policy direction? The last question of the above list is the one we should address first. For if we choose not to attempt to rationally direct social change within the context of some presumed set of generally shared values, we will inflict on our progeny a multitude of complex and severe social problems that may well guarantee the eventual decline of our great society - one of the greatest social achievements of human history. Shall we relive in the next half century the sad experience of our metropolitan growth experience, which has reached the point where we cannot tolerate the social stench of rotting metroplexes? No! We must and can find ways to develop a reasonable and constructive general policy aimed at helping rural people and their communities build social frameworks promising a decent chance for a good, humane life for all classes and types of Americans. Harry Schwarzweller (1978:19) in his presidential address to the Rural Sociological Society describes this need well: "--it is important that we begin to formulate some kind of reasoned imagery of where the changing rural scene will lead. Positions must be established and guideposts set if we are to serve as informed advisers."

The Rural Population: Growth and Distribution

Until very recently most people in our country, including national policy makers, had thought of rural America in negative terms: in terms of depopulation, economic stagnation, and deteriorating and dying communities. Part of this can be attributed to the tendency to confuse rural people with farmers, an occupational category that has been progressively declining for decades and which suffered a sharp, dramatic decline in the sixties. Today only a small proportion of rural people are in fact full-time, commercial farmers (Beale, 1978:37-41; Fitzsimmons, et. al., 1980:495-496). Rural people were generally stigmatized by others as "hicks" and "kickers", lacking in urban sophistication and highly provincial in their attitudes (Cosby, 1980). In fact, for several decades the notion embodied in the label of "The People Left Behind" represented the general image of rural people (Kasarda, 1980:380). And, in all too many cases it was not far from the objective reality. But, evidently rural America as a place to live still possessed positive attributes that have become increasingly attractive to metropolitan people. The decade of the seventies has produced a revolutionary trend reversing the bleak and negative images of rural America that have persisted over the recent past.

In 1974 about fifty-eight million Americans lived in nonmetropolitan counties according to Calvin Beale (1978:51). And Beale reported 1974 data indicating clearly that nonmetropolitan areas, even those not adjacent to metropolitan places, are now growing in population faster than metropolitan areas per se: a dramatic reversal of a long-standing demographic pattern. We probably have close to 60 million Americans

living in nonmetropolitan areas by now. We may find it difficult to visualize many more people than this in relatively rural settings, for as Beale (1978:54) has pointed out, the larger nonmetropolitan cities are transformed into metropolitan areas with continued strong growth patterns.

Between 1970 and 1978 almost three million more people moved out of metropolitan areas than moved in and three-fourths of all nonmetropolitan counties in the United States gained population (Kasarda, 1980:380). In a very recent analysis, using 1980 United States Census data, Beale (1981) reports that for the decade of the seventies nonmetropolitan areas grew by 15.4 percent as compared with a 9.1 percent rate of growth for metropolitan areas. And this pattern of population growth was widespread, covering all regions and was most substantial in the kinds of rural places most unlike metropolitan cities - those small in size and more distant from metropolitan centers (Kasarda, 1980:380-381 and Heaton and Fuguitt, 1980).

Accompanying this turn-around of population growth in nonmetropolitan America, was a revitalization of the economic and employment structures (Price and Clay, 1980). According to a recent report by Fitzsimmons and colleagues (1980:494-495) nonmetropolitan employment growth rates exceeded metropolitan ones in eight of nine industrial categories between 1970 and 1976: surprisingly, the only exception was in refrence to "farming - forestry - fisheries".

Census estimates of the 1977 United States population clearly indicat[illegible]hat in every major region of the United States nonmetropolitan areas grew more rapidly between 1970 and 1977 than metropolitan areas:

and, that this growth rate differential by type of place of residence was of dramatic proportions in the Northeast and North Central regions (Chalmers and Greenwood, 1980:531). United States Census statistics reported by the above noted authors indicate the following regional distribution of the nonmetropolitan people in 1977: the South held more than four out of every ten nonmetropolitan residents followed by the North Central region with about 20 million, and then the Northeast (11 million) and the West (8-1/2 million). In every region there is a very substantial rural population and it is growing rapidly. At some point, however, this growth will diminish the total number of people in residence areas outside of metropolitan counties as larger nonmetropolitan areas become transformed into metropolitan ones. Consequently, it is not reasonable to presume that these statistical growth rates will climb markedly for an indefinite period. One certain outcome of this demographic pattern is that we will be spawning new metropolitan areas, which will be dispersed across the country; consequently, increasingly more rural communities and families will be feeling the pressures and influences of metropolitan complexes in close proximity to them, which should not be judged as all bad (Price and Clay, 1980). As John Kasarda (1980:382-383) has concluded, we are experiencing "an urbanization of nonmetropolitan territory" and this makes the hinterland all the more attractive to potential metropolitan migrants.

Experts writing about the regional and nonmetropolitan - metropolitan shifts of growth rates in the United States population predict these patterns will continue for some time and that they will have profound impacts on both metropolitan and rural life (Price and Clay, 1980; Chalmers

and Greenwood, 1980:543; Heaton and Fuguitt, 1980:520-521; Zuiches and Brown, 1978:70-72). At the same time we should not ignore the fact that a number of rural counties are not participating in this spectacular growth trend: Beale (1981) states that in 1980 a large number of nonmetro counties - 485 of them - were still experiencing a declining population. These counties will require different plans for and programs of community development than the others. Also, evidence exists to indicate that the number of small farms in operation is increasing, reversing another long-term pattern of the past (Harper, et. al., 1980). Surely, the new rural America will be diverse - a complex mixture of varying units and goupings of people with varying dreams, ambitions, and needs. And, the dimensions of diversity among rural people outlined above are compounded by racial and ethnic variability and old and evolving social class differences. One important dimension of this diversity relates to the disproportionate rates of poverty experienced by rural people compared with others (Chadwick and Bahr, 1978; Moland and Page, 1981; Moxley, 1980). Regardless of the progress we have made over the last several decades in bringing more public services and assistance to the rural poor, and even given the optimism we are now experiencing about current trends in economic development of rural areas, poverty will continue to be a pervasive attribute of many rural areas. Let us make sure we do not forget the plight of the families trapped in a cycle of poverty.

Ecological Issues Of Rural America For The 80's [2]

An important aspect of the quality of rural life is the rural environment with its relatively clean air and water, land availability and lower density of population settlement (Metzen, 1980). In fact, for many who live in urban areas and that are moving to rural areas these characteristics, and the social and economic conditions that result from them, such as informal interaction patterns, lower costs of living, and relatively greater safety and security, are those characteristics which attracted them to rural areas (Zuiches, 1980). Unless carefully managed, however, ecological events occurring in the next few years may markedly alter the very circumstances that have made rural areas increasingly attractive.

The rural "turnaround" that occurred in the 1970's is now widely known (Brown and Wardwell, 1980) and the results from the 1980 census clearly certify that population growth has occurred in nearly all parts of rural America (Beale, 1981). Thus many rural areas are experiencing long desired growth which will increase job opportunities and provide an expanded economic base (Barney, 1980).

However, the growth experienced may also lead to severe difficulties for rural areas as they attempt to manage it and yet maintain their quality of life. Technological change and its ecological consequences are of particular significance in this regard.

In many ways rural areas are experiencing both the advantages and disadvantages of technological development. Increases in transportation

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[2] This is an edited version of a piece authored by Steve H. Murdock who is the leader of the Department of Rural Sociology of The Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, Texas A&M University.

and communication technology have continued to improve their access to the consumer goods and luxuries of more urban areas of the nation. In addition, improving technology has reduced the risks for human labor in performing many of the more dangerous and repetitive agricultural tasks.

Technology, however, also affects rural areas because rural areas directly experience the labor reduction resulting from technology applications and because they are receiving many of the indirect by-products of technological growth in urban and rural society. Thus the growth in agricultural technology continues to be the major reason for the decline in the number of farms and the increase in the size of farms. Technology is leading to changes in the structure of what has historically been the backbone of rural economies--agriculture, (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1981)--and is allowing an increasingly smaller proportion of rural Americans to be directly involved in agriculture.

Rural areas are also often seen as ideal dumping grounds for the by-products of modern technology. Rural areas are increasingly seen as the best locations for the storage of chemical and low and high level nuclear wastes. Senator Patrick Leahy has recently called attention to this unquestioned assumption and the inequities involved in it for rural residents (U.S. Committee on Agriculture, Subcommittee On Rural Development, 1980). For some rural areas, then, the increased use of technology may mean that they must bear increased societal wide responsibilities and disproportionate costs for society's technological developments. Rural areas require assistance to insure that they are treated equitably and that their quality of life is not significantly reduced as the result

of attempts to expand agricultural productivity. In addition, the 1980's will witness a significant increase in the demand for rural areas non-renewable resources, particularly coal, gas and oil, uranium, ground water and land. As with technological impacts, these demands are generated largely by urban society but their effects are experienced most directly in rural areas.

As the nation attempts to obtain increased independence from foreign energy suppliers many rural areas will experience the impacts of energy development (Murdock and Leistritz, 1979). These impacts may result in long-desired economic and demographic growth but may also increase levels of air and water pollution, place severe strains on local services and on the fiscal bases of rural areas, and may alter the social nature of rural communities.

In a similar manner increased urban pressures are occurring on rural lands and rural water supplies necessary for irrigation, (U. S. Department of Agriculture, 1979). As these pressures increase, agricultural areas may be forced to compete for the basic substances necessary for the agricultural health of the nation.

In sum, then, the 1980's will be an era of ecological challenges for rural areas in America. In large part, rural America will be asked to provide a context where the elderly and others from urban America can pursue long-desired goals, to serve as a source of new energy supplies, to provide a place for the safe storage of the waste products of urban society and to share the land and water resources that are its most precious commodities. The challenge for rural Americans and American Society is to insure that as the effects of these ecological changes occur, rural residents are treated equitably and that the quality of rural life continues to improve.

Rural Minorities In The United States

Racial and ethnic variability in rural America has been largely ignored by contemporary social scientists and government policymakers and operatives. And, both the society at large and the particular rural ethnic and racial populations suffer a loss of human potential as a result. A small group of rural sociologists recently developed a book chapter designed to meliorate this situation and we rely on this piece from which to abstract a very brief overview of ethnic and racial diversity in the rural United States (Kuvlesky, et. al., 1981).

The dispersion of rural and ethnic minorities in the United States tends to be regionally structured; for instance, almost all rural Blacks are located in the South, almost all rural Mexican Americans are located in the Southwest and most of the Amish reside in only three states - Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Indiana. But considering all minorities present in the United States today, almost all regions of the country have serious problem-plagued minority group situations.

The racial and ethnic minority groups located in the non-metropolitan areas of the United States of America differ in their locations, the extent to which they are culturally homogeneous, the degree to which they are organized, in the nature and degree to which they experience pejorative treatment, and even in their shared desires for cultural and social pluralism.

Mormons have achieved a relatively high level of cultural and social assimilation and the Amish very little. Yet, each of these ethnic groups is relatively well organized, and each has achieved the order of

relationship with the larger society its members generally desire. While both are the targets of negative prejudice, they do not suffer severe socio-economic disadvantages as compared with other minority groups in rural America. On the other hand, rural Blacks in the South and rural Mexican Americans in the Southwest demonstrate tremendous intragroup diversity in refrence to culture, patterns of social activity, material well being, and even in their notions toward whether full assimilation is a desireable goal or not (Stanley and Kuvlesky, 1979; Kuvlesky, 1979a). Neither of these two ethnic units are internally organized to a very high degree beyond the local level and both experience low social ranking in the ethnic stratification system of our society, reflecting extremely high levels of poverty and rather extreme patterns of negative prejudices and discrimination (Durant and Knowlton, 1978).

Native Americans have generally maintained cultural pluralism as a social end, seeking at least tribal autonomy. In recent decades a social movement has united some elements of some tribes to seek common ends in relationship to state and federal governments. Still, it is all too apparent that substantial intratribal diversity in orientations toward what is best for the American Indian relative to assimilation vs. maintenance of traditional patterns and social autonomy persists. Like the rural Blacks and Mexican Americans, the rural American Indians remain relatively unorganized and suffer extreme rates of poverty, unemployment, and extreme institutionalized configuation of negative discrimination of any ethnic minority in our country.

The Southeast Asians are an evolving ethnic minority in our society.

Certainly, those that have chosen to settle in rural parts of the Gulf Coast region have already found that they will face severe intergroup problems if they choose to remain in small towns there. They will persist as a relatively culturally different and socially isolated people for some time. On the other hand, the Cajuns of SW Louisiana are for all intents and purposes well assimilated in a social sense and far along the route of full cultural assimilation.

Policy makers, social developers, and humanists concerned with helping the rural disadvantaged should clearly understand that these rural minorities are too diverse in their nature as social groups for a singular meliorative program aimed at all to be of much good. And, the ethnic groups themselves are not well organized beyond a local community level and embrace a wide diversity of cultural and social patterns. The best programs to assist the rural minority group members will be developed at a local level first, using the members of the ethnic groups themselves to define their problems and needs and to establish ways of meeting these. At the same time the USDA should take on an explicit advocacy role for these groups as a whole to make sure their interests are represented in national policy priority setting and program developments (Kuvlesky, et. al., 1981).

Diversity of Values and Aspirations

Value orientations of rural people are often stereotyped in the perceptions of others, including scholars, as being relatively traditional and very conservative in social, political, and moral considerations (Coughenour and Busch, 1978:219-225; Christenson, 1981:45). In fact, much recent evidence exists to indicate that the aspirations and values of rural people in general are as pluralistic as, and not very different from, those of metropolitan people of the same region, ethnicity and social class (Helmick, 1980:62; Kuvlesky, 1977:7-15). And a number of researchers have concluded that whatever patterned differences do exist between rural and urban people in the United States are declining over time (Willits, et. al., 1973; Kuvlesky; 1977). What is more important, the value patterns and life ends of Americans are not homogeneously patterned in tight, close-knit ideological bundles by any type of place of residence distinction (Larson, 1978:106-112). Different patterned sets of values exist within a locality setting, an ethnic subcommunity existing within it, and even sometimes among members of a given family (Kuvlesky, 1977:5-7). Ethnicity, age, occupation, and personal religious faith probably have more to do with value differences in general than type or location of residence area. A very recent study of values of metropolitan and non-metropolitan parents and youth involving 15 states in the Midwest and Southwest indicate no patterned differences by place of residence of any significance; however patterned differences were found between Mexican Americans and Anglos regardless of place of residence location (Helmick, 1980:62): one tends to find similar value pluralism in rural communities as is found in metropolitan centers.

There are, no doubt, general values that are shared among most rural people in the United States; however, these may also be broadly shared with many if not most metropolitan residents as well (Larson, 1978:111; Coughenour and Busch, 1978:225-228; Helmick, 1980:62). And evidence exists to indicate that even among very homogeneous local populations rural people do maintain simultaneously values that can be judged as ultra "conservative" and also those that can be judged to be extremely "liberal". Findings illustrating this from a very recent survey of Mexican Americans adults residing in a small, nonmetropolitan county in South Texas are provided in Table 1 (Ballard and Kuvlesky, 1981). Note that large proportions of these Mexican Americans residing in the same small county simultaneously support some "conservative" values and some "liberal" ones: for instance, most support the work ethic and strong police action and at the same time many support federal intervention in local affairs and legalization of marijuana.

It is quite clear that an important dimension of valuation closely linked to place of residence preferences of Americans today has to do with feelings about interracial and intergroup contact: desires to have, or not have, intergroup contacts are very important considerations. Rural racial and ethnic group members vary markedly in this regard even within local community settings. Certainly, it can be assumed that whites or "Anglos" vary in this regard as well. But, in small places in the United States today where significant racial or ethnic variability exists, it is more difficult to produce broad, inclusive segregation patterns than it is in metropolitan areas. Consequently, modes of intergroup adaptation and adjustment must be worked out continuously. That is not to say that we do not have segregated patterns in rural places, for obviously we do, but

Table 1. A Comparison of Mexican American Adults Value Orientations By Type of Place of Residence, 1978-1979.

Values	South Texas Study Areas	
	Metro* (N-189)	Nonmetro** (N=119)
	(% in Agreement)	
A. Traditional Orientations		
1. Duty comes before pleasure	87	72
2. Religious Beliefs Need Strengthening	41	70
3. Police Should Not Hesitate To Use Force	53	60
4. Private Property Is Sacred	96	66
5. Federal Government Should Stay Out of Local-State Affairs	25	29
B. Liberal Orientations		
1. Sex Education In School	53	54
2. Women Should Have Same Right For Career As Men	95	81
3. Legalize Marijuana	3	21
4. Too Little Attention Paid To Minority Groups	49	37

* Southmost Barrio, Brownsville, Texas.
** Brooks County, Texas

that it can not be maintained across all contexts of social activity. On the other hand, such inclusive, group-specific segregation has long been a characteristic pattern of metropolitan America, and is becoming increasingly more rigid with time. Consequently, if one values total segregation of groups it is easier to realize this value in a large city than in a small place, having ethnic-racial diversity.

Even given the variability in values of rural people, patterned intergroup problems can be expected between natives of a given location and the newcomers flowing in as a result of the metropolitan out-migration trend. However, these will more likely stem from reciprocal negative prejudices and clashing vested interests rooted in economic considerations, social class differences, and the attempts of the newcomers to break into long established power arrangements regulating political processes and public services than they will be due to vast differences in general value configurations. At the same time, one should expect an influx of metro inmigrants to add to and extend the value pluralism and diversity of social interests, political attitudes, and consumer preferences existing within any given community setting.

America, rural and urban, is generally a pluralistic society. Consequently one can expect the population of almost any community to demonstrate variable values. Obviously this variability carries the potential for stress and conflict, particularly if some people feel that others are attempting to block the realization of their personal values. At the same time, it is this variability, and the respect for it, that signifies social freedom; it evidences the fact that we are a free people living in a free

society.

Obviously, another important source of diversity in values of rural people rests in the very motives of the people for residing in these communities. Farmers will live in these communities because it is an occupational requirement or expediency to do so: and, they are clearly different from other rural dwellers in their values - more conservative in every sense (Larson, 1978:107-111). Many others live in small towns and cities, or around them, because they enjoy the slower pace of life, the sense of more physical freedom and more space, the fuller range of social contacts possible, and etc. These people may or may not meet their employment needs in their residence communities. If they don't, they probably are not going to be "growth oriented", while those who depend on the community for their employment and incomes will be.

Increasingly, more rural residents are also metropolitan residents, dividing their time between households seasonally, monthly, or even daily. These residents will be from the upper classes and they will have an interest in conserving the "rural character" of their neighborhoods in the rural areas. And, they are not likely to get too involved in local politics and voluntary associations. Their interests in rural America are as consumers of the rural setting.

Also, increasingly we find the metropolitan elderly being attracted to rural settings - escaping the dangers and strife of the metroplexes. They are going to value, highly, medical and health services, protective services, and social stability. On the whole they are not going to be progressive relative to needs of youth and education or much interested in growth development.

And, dispersed throughout the United States we will find small communal groups seeking nothing but the freedom to live a different life style: relative geographic isolation and less than rigorous police scrutiny reduces the problems in doing this in a rural area. Many of these may support "counter-culture" tendencies at odds with the values and the norms of the surrounding communities. But, they will still have to seek employment in these places and they will depend on them for many services.

In summary, rural America is culturally pluralistic in a host of ways. Aside from patterned regional variations, often linked to ethnicity and social class, incredible variation exists in the value configurations present in any local area, even those that are small. Diversity is the general tendency not homogeneity (Larson, 1978:111-112).

The Changing Present

What do we know of what is happening to rural America? Quite a bit. We know it is becoming more and more attractive as a locational setting for ever increasing numbers of families and businesses and industries. We know it is occupationally diverse, and that farmers and farm families constitute only a small and decreasing proportion of the total nonmetropolitan population. We also know that the urban to rural "reverse migration" patterns are fed by different motives to produce a better life and will contribute to further diversification of the occupational structures, increase employment opportunities, and add new dimensions of diversity to the styles of life, value systems, and interests and activities among nonmetropolitan residents. Within this increased diversity rests the potential for a new vitality and, of course, potentials for new social stresses and even conflicts (Price and Clay, 1980: 604-605). Demands for new and expanded services will increase and overburden already strained local taxing capablities. And, in the end many new, small metropolitan areas will be spawned from the realization of these potentials stimulating continued growth: the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas examined over the past three decades offers a clear, recent example of this process (Miller and Maril, 1979).

On the other hand, we also know that many small rural communities have had their identity stripped and their social fabric ripped apart by the pervasive movement toward consolidation of services - churches, retail outlets, protective services and, most importantly, schools - under the guise of "economic effeciency" and "improved quality". More than a

fourth of all nonmetropolitan counties still face this set of problems associated with depopulation. These rural areas and communities face different development needs and they will require different policies and programs to meet their needs. They should not be forgotten!

We know that the disadvantaged racial and ethnic minorities living in the rural sector of our society are among the most economically and socially deprived groups in our society. And, we know that problems of intergroup prejudices and negative discrimination patterned by region and locality impede the ability of these people to break the bonds of the "cycle of poverty".

We know that at present many rural communities are becoming dumping grounds for metropolitan wastes and that many rural people - old and new residents - are becoming actively agitated by this and are taking forceful political actions to combat this pattern. The time when metropolitan based interests could do what they would with property they owned in rural areas is fast fading into the past. New cooperative arrangements, sensitized to the needs and desires of rural dwellers are evolving. Increasing energy costs threaten the new vitality of urbanizing and agriculturally based sectors of rural America: this threat must be faced and resolved.

We know that the types of people - their styles of life, their basic values and cherished hopes, and their perceived needs - are very diverse in rural America. Built into this diversity is a continuing potential for clashing interests, factioning, and intergroup conflict.

It is impossible to describe rural America in simple generalized terms, other than to say it is extremely diverse in its communities and its people. Thus, any reasonable program for rural development in the United States will have to be flexible enough to allow this diversity to be considered.

The sad plight of rural youth living in disadvantaged rural areas, particularly minority youth, should at least be mentioned here. They value attainment of the same kinds of life goals as other youth in the United States; however, they exist in settings that will hinder their achievement of these high aspirations (Kuvlesky, 1979a&b and 1980). Again, both their life ends and the impediments they face in accomplishing these vary. Without outside assistance (i.e., professional expertise, programs, and funding) local rural communities will not be able to provide for their special developmental needs.

Images of The Future

There is little doubt that a new rural America is evolving. What it will become depends to a large extent on whether or not we can reach some consensus on what we want it to be or not: and, if we can, whether or not we will develop a national policy to further our ideals in this regard. Clearly, from what we know we can draw some fairly clear alternatives of what the possible, even probable, future states of Rural America might be: several social scientists have already made a start in this direction (Coughenour and Busch, 1978:211-228; Bertrand, 1978:75-88; Wilkinson, 1978: 115-125; Wardwell and Gilchrist, 1980:567-580; Kasarda, 1980:389-397). Our past and present tendency to "let nature take its course" - to react to patterns of change rather than to try and shape these - produces continuous strings of problems at all levels of social organization of society, contributes to the spawning of intergroup conflicts and institutional disruptions within rural areas, and wastes economic resources and human potentials in vast amounts. We must develop a national rural de-

velopment policy that serves the long-run needs of both rural and metropolitan people and the larger interests of the nation. Such a policy will require broad public support and aggressive well organized advocates. What possible models for development are reasonable? Which among these is the most desirable?

One possible alternative is based in the beliefs and values of a "traditional rural" ideology - a rural romanticism that emphasizes small scale, full local autonomy, and the amenities of country and small town life (Sher, 1977: Chapters 3 and 7). In our judgement, such a model, while ideologically attractive in some respects, is an unrealizable dream (Wilkinson, 1978:124-125). It can not represent a general pattern for rural development; although it may well be achieved in particular settings to some small extent as the Amish have clearly demonstrated.

Even though ideologically we might prefer to argue for local autonomy and the right of self-determination for rural communities, we would be foolish to presume that rural communities and nonmetropolitan areas can persist independent of the influences of metropolitan activities and larger public needs. Even in the smaller and less densely populated rural towns, the institutional components, and even the families inhabiting these places, are tied into many larger arenas of social action and other outside social organizations in literally hundreds of ways. More often than not this tendency will continue as a dominant pattern of future change as time goes on. Even the Amish in their tightly bounded local communities are voluntarily accepting this truth of modern American society and adapting to it (Kuvlesky, et. al., 1981). To a large extent, the

hinderland of America will develop and evolve in relation to meeting the needs of the larger metropolitan population and institutionalized configurations serving the broad public, rather than solely in terms of serving in some kind of simplistic sense its own locally determined needs. We believe this is a fact of historical development that can not be altered generally.

Another possibility - the polar extreme of the "traditional rural" - is to visualize rural America as simply an auxillary, servicing sector for the predominant metropolitan core of our society. To see it as a source of basic resources to be consumed by metropolitan peoples, as an area of service facilities for leisure and recreation, and as a dumping ground for the "wastes" of metropolitan living - nuclear waste, garbage, criminals, and the elderly. Such a model would presume a need for rural development policies to reflect ways of better serving metropolitan needs and helping to reverse metropolitan decline (Kasarda, 1980:389-397). This is clearly not only a possible scenario, but a very probable one. It is likely to be the closest picture of the eventual future of rural America if we do nothing at all to direct social changes presently taking place (Wilkinson, 1978:123-125).

Several other possibilities lying somewhere between these two extreme scenarios have recently been sketched by Coughenour and Busch (1978): they have labeled these alternatives "Modernized Rurality" and "A Telic Society". Their notion of "Modernized Rurality" is a realistic modification of the extreme "traditional rural" picture drawn above. It assumes a relative homogeneity of rural values, local control and relative autonomy, and col-

laborative associations with rural-oriented agencies of technical and professional expertise (i.e., Agricultural Extension Service, etc.). This is the kind of model, in fact, that guides much of what does pass for rural development policty today. It is the intellectual plan implicitly behind the programs and activities spawned by USDA units and their state counterparts in the land-grant colleges. While not as improbable as the more extreme "traditional rural" model, it lacks relevance because rural America has, in general, already changed beyond this point. Rural people are already more similar than different from urban people in their values and aspirations and rural communities are already linked intimately along a number of dimensions of social organization with metropolitan - centered decision making units and activities. Perhaps for some communities, this is a reasonable model - those that are relatively isolated and still rely mostly on production agriculture or mining for an economic base. However, most communities will not be able to escape the increasing urbanization of life and complexity of ties with other communities, including metropolitan ones. In fact, some social scientists have argued it is these very tendencies that stimulated the "rural - urban turn around" in migration.

The "telic society" scenario is an ideologically extreme pattern based on valuing social change, diversity, and local self-determination. We love it! Yet, outside of isolated communal settings we think it will not be approximated.

In all probability, our society will remain open enough to permit the flexibility required to allow for the development or maintenance of

some communities along the lines of the scenarios drawn above. However, none of them, except the "metropolitan appendage" type is realistically possible as a prevailing general pattern of organization around which to forge a national policy. Furthermore, the "metropolitan appendage" is not attractive to most people having a strong vested interest in rural America.

What is left? A flexible model that recognizes the reality and the desirability of diversity among and within rural communities. And, one that faces up to the hard facts of life that metropolitan and nometropolitan sectors of the society are intimately intertwined. One that recognizes the need for rural communities to creatively mix local initiative, private entrepreneurship, and governmental facilitation and resource support to build new institutions, better public services, and greater opportunities for a better quality of life for more people. A reasonable policy for achieving this has recently been described by Swanson, et. al., in their book, Small Towns and Small Towners: A Framework For Survival and Growth. Also, other sections of this book will address specific strategies and policies aimed at achieving these ends.

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